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*The end of training on Income Generating Activities for the first group on 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> March 2016*

## **Program: Reinforcing and Empowering Communities to Overcome the Effects of Conflict in Bambari and Surrounding Areas (RECOVER)**

**FY16 Q2 Report: January 1<sup>st</sup> – March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016 Submitted May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

## A. Summary of Achievements

The Reinforcing and Empowering Communities to Overcome the Effects of Conflict (RECOVER) project is the progression of a previous OFDA grant (Award No: **AID-OFDA-G-13-00174**) that is being implemented from September 23, 2013- July 31, 2016 to mitigate the negative effects of mounting conflicts and to strengthen community resilience in Bambari and its surrounding areas.

**Goal:** Internally displaced households in Bambari access support to meet their basic needs, recover livelihoods, and return to their former neighborhoods.

During the reporting period, the project achieved the following results:

- 160 beneficiaries (34 men and 126 women) trained in Income Generating Activities (IGA) and Village Savings and Loan (VSLA)
- 11 health focal points (6 men and 5 women) were trained in the medical assistance of survivors of sexual violence
- 48 youth (27 boys and 21 girls) trained in child protection
- 29 community leaders (22 men and 7 women) trained in how to advise the community on issues related to gender-based violence (GBV)
- 34 coaches (13 women and 21 men) trained in GBV and child protection
- 765 children participated in 136 sessions of play therapy activities led by 34 trained coaches
- The Listening Center responded to 236 cases of conflict-related violence and GBV throughout the reporting period, supporting 27 men, 173 women, 2 boys and 34 girls
- 72 cases of family violence mediated successfully
- The GBV community prevention activities reached 15,241 persons throughout the period; of which 3,538 men; 4,508 women; 3,960 girls and 3,235 boys
- 156 households have been prepared to begin rehabilitation during the third quarter of the project

## B. Security

After the recent parliamentary and presidential elections, the Ouaka Prefecture (like all of CAR) is pending the deployment of new local authorities and is seeing an increased presence of the gendarmerie and police to ensure the security for the population. The majority of the displaced population holds expectations that the elections will result in an improvement in security in their area of potential return. The MINUSCA soldiers have changed from the Congolese contingents to Mauritanian soldiers during February-March 2016, which has left a security vacuum as they adopt to their new roles and context. This has led bandits and armed people to spread panic and create insecurity in Bambari and its surroundings.

A rebel Anti-Balaka-Felly leader fled to the Bambari-Kouango base, which has pushed some of the returnee population back to IDP camps due to abuse, threats, and fear. In Bambari-Liwa, the road that goes to the Mbomou Prefecture has experienced more destabilization due to armed

groups. Thefts and robberies continue and have increased during the quarter, with crime rates pushing people back to the IDP camps in the Ouaka area. Sporadic attacks on Sangaris managed IDP sites have caused injuries and even deaths, including one Mercy Corps community volunteer partner, a facilitator of play therapy activities who was killed by gunmen. The movements of armed Peuls who plunder and destroy farmers' fields were also reported in the area. The town of Bambari has also experienced attacks by grenades, targeting sites where groups of people gather (e.g. restaurants and bars).

Despite the continued insecurity, our activities remain largely unaffected except for slight delays in the identification of returnee households in March 2016.

### C. Progress against work-plan

#### 1. Vulnerable IDPs returning home restart livelihoods activities

1. Vulnerable IDPs returning home restart livelihood activities					
SECTOR #1 Economic Recovery and Market Systems	Objective: Vulnerable IDPs returning home restart livelihoods activities				
Geographic Area (s)	Ngouandji: Akpé and Mbrepou neighborhoods of Bambari				
Beneficiaries Targeted	Total: 0		IDP: 0		
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)	Total: 0		IDP: 0		
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)	Total: 0		IDP: 0		
Subsector: Livelihoods Restoration					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Period Reached
Number of people assisted through livelihood restoration activities, by sex	Male : 53	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Female: 147	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Other	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percent of beneficiaries reporting their livelihoods restored within three to six months after receiving support	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A

During the reporting period, two studies were conducted by Mercy Corps (in January and February 2016) to assess household vulnerability and analyze profitable activities in the project area. After analysis and consultation with stakeholders, the following criteria has been implemented for household selection for livelihood restoration activities:

- Female head of household;
- Have experience of IGA before the crisis;

- Losing capital as a result of the crisis;
- Household with no more than six people;
- Returned to Ngouandji and Mbrepou project area; confirmed by the head of the district and neighbors.

This has allowed us to identify 200 vulnerable households for economic restoration and livelihood in the area of return. Training was provided to 160 of the 200 IGA beneficiaries (80%) focused on how to choose a profitable IGA, how to manage an IGA, and the development of a micro-business plan. Economic interest groups have been established among 160 beneficiaries to save their IGA earnings in savings and credit groups (VSLA).

The table below shows the types of activities chosen by the groups:

IGA	Total	%
Small food and non-food business	145	91%
Vegetable market	2	1%
Fishing	3	2%
Animal husbandry	4	3%
Painting	1	1%
Crops	5	3%
Total	160	100%

Profitability of these activities were analysed in the study conducted in February 2016 by Mercy Corps. Within this study, Mercy Corps listed the IGAs in order of economic profitability: the sale of food products is the most cited (48%) and households also cited saponification as among the top priorities (13.8%).

**2. Children, women, families and survivors of violence, abduction and/or displacement are identified, referred and have increased access to holistic services (psychosocial, health, and socio-economic)**

<b>SECTOR #2</b>	<i>Objective: Children, women, families and survivors of violence, abduction and/or displacement are identified, referred and have increased access to holistic services</i>	
<b>PROTECTION</b>		
Geographic Area (s)	Ngouandji: Akpé and Mbrepou neighborhoods of Bambari	
Beneficiaries Targeted	Total: 11,584 (6,000 IDPs)	100% target
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)	Total: 15,241 (7,195 IDPs)	132% achieved this quarter in comparison with total target

Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)	Total: 16,701 (8,465IDPs)	144% achieved in comparison with total target
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From January to March 2016, Mercy Corps conducted 126 awareness sessions and reached 15,241 community members: 3,538 men, 4,508 women, 3,960 girls, and 3,235 boys. Community counselors and welfare committee members led sessions on specific themes including the struggle against physical violence and what to do when you are a victim. In the IDP sites, the community counselors and welfare committee members conducted sensitizations by contacting households and their dependents directly in the site. They also held focus group discussions with the IDPs on these themes. In the communities, the welfare committee members hosted focus group discussions and sensitization campaigns with people of their communities.

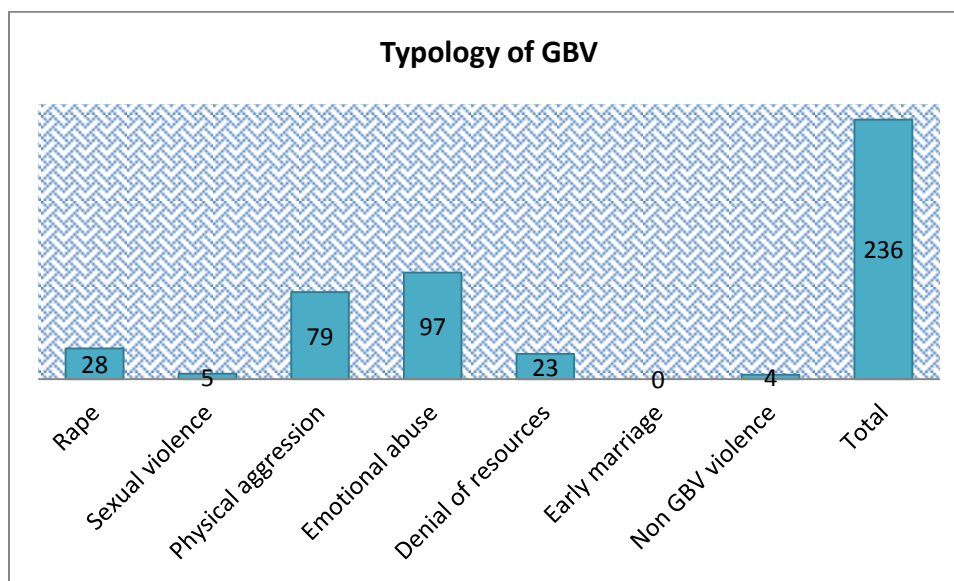
Subsector: Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of individuals benefitting from GBV services, by sex	Male	Yes	N/A	27	41 survivors
	Female	Yes	N/A	173	264 survivors
	Other (children)	Yes	N/A	36	46 survivors
Number of people trained in GBV prevention or response, by sex	Male	Yes	18	49	52
	Female	Yes	99	25	62
	Other	No	N/A	48	48
Number of people trained in psychosocial support, by sex	Male	Yes	0	0	0
	Female	Yes	15	0	17
	Other (children)	Yes	0	0	0
Play therapy: Number of children enrolled	Male	Yes	240	418	418
	Female	Yes	240	302	302
	Other	No	N/A	N/A	N/A

### Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response

Bambari's Listening Center received 236 GBV and conflict related cases during the reporting period (27 men, 173 women, 2 boys, and 34 girls). Visitors were given psychosocial support and

medical referrals as needed. 126 of the 236 psychosocial cases including 72 cases of family mediations have been successfully closed during this reporting period.

The below graphs show the breakdown (number) according to typology of GBV cases in Bambarie for this quarter:



Emotional abuse and physical aggression remain the most recurrent types of GBV registered during the reporting period. These represent 74% of all the cases received in the Listening Center: 41% for emotional abuse and 33% for physical aggression.

### Play Therapy

During the reporting period, 765 children participated in 136 sessions with 34 trained coaches at least 2-3 times a month. The 17 play therapy groups have been active, with approximately four to eight meetings/trainings per month organized by coaches for each club. In addition to sports and games, these meetings include talks on conflict resolution and human rights, with active contribution from the children. In total the project has enrolled 765 children (45 children per club for 17 clubs supported by the project).



*A beneficiary front of her house to be rehabilitated*

### 3. Vulnerable IDP households are able to return home and meet basic household needs

An analysis and definition of the selection criteria study was conducted in February 2016 with the support of the Mercy Corps Monitoring and Evaluation team. 956 households were part of the survey to allow identification of the 200 households to be rehabilitated. The following selection criteria were used to identify houses:

- Households with female heads of household;

- Houses with the roof completely destroyed;
- The condition of the site of the house is too poor to live;
- If the head of household is a man, the size of his household must be greater than or equal to 8.

The difference between this and the IGA criteria is due to the fact that many houses have been damaged, therefore it was necessary to make the criteria stricter.

During this reporting period, 200 homes were selected and a mason was recruited as a consultant for two weeks to measure the level of damage and evaluate the needs for the roofs, doors, and windows. 10 construction technicians, carpenters, and masons have been recruited to ensure the monitoring and supervision of the house rehabilitation work of the beneficiaries.

#### **D. Challenges and Lessons learned**

Challenges:

- The security situation in the area remains volatile for returnees. Military posts that were around the area targeted by Akpé returnees were removed, and the departure of the troops has caused a climate of insecurity and criminality in uninhabited areas. The discovery of three bodies in Akpé district drove a few households back to the IDP sites.
- The number of households with homes destroyed in the return area is more than the 200 targeted by the project, which creates frustration for households who are not beneficiaries. To mitigate this risk we have decided to use some non-beneficiary households as workers for the rehabilitation of the beneficiary households. This strategy will reduce the frustration for some non-beneficiaries who will earn some money through these activities. It is also hoped that this will build community cohesion.
- The rainy season has started which will make certain tasks and activities more difficult. Mercy Corps is putting steps in place to ensure the continued motivation of the workers throughout the construction period.

We have learned the following for future projects in the area:

- Plan activities for the promotion of peace and social cohesion between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. We plan to work with our EC funded RCAP project to conduct some activities related to peacebuilding in the area to promote social cohesion, especially between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the home rehabilitation project.
- Identify at least 10-25% of host families and IDPS among the beneficiaries of the rehabilitation and socio-economic recovery of vulnerable households

#### **E. Coordination**

Mercy Corps is a permanent partner in humanitarian meetings in the Ouaka prefecture, especially the sub-prefecture of Bambari. We participate in coordination meetings of the GBV working group; the regional cluster coordination meeting with UNHCR protection; the working group meeting Shelter-NFI and shelter with UNHCR, ICRC, Triangle, and ACTED; the child protection working group meeting with UNICEF; the health working group meeting with WHO; WASH sub-working group meeting with UNICEF and Triangle; and the humanitarian



coordination meeting with UNOCHA.

Mercy Corps is also present in all safety meetings organized by INSO. With our permanent presence in the area, we are a key partner for the realization of the coordinated humanitarian interventions in Ouaka.

<b>F. Upcoming Activities</b>
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During the upcoming reporting period, Mercy Corps will:

- Continue with protection activities in the community and the Listening Center in Bambari
- Finalize the training and support of IGA beneficiaries
- Rehabilitate the houses of vulnerable returnee households
- Provide NFI support to 1,000 beneficiary households
- Conduct hygiene sensitization and support to 1,000 returned persons with aqua tabs
- Prepare the close out meeting and the final evaluation of the project

***Attachments:***

1. *Required: Updated PMP*